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OLC 71-0883  
23 August 1971

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD**

**SUBJECT: Director's Conversation with Senator Stennis Regarding  
Agency Program in Laos**

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1. This morning the Director told General Cushman, Messrs. Houston, [ ] and me of his meeting with Senator Stennis on Friday, 20 August.
  2. Senator Stennis began by asking the Director's views on the desirability of a secret Senate session on Laos. The Director said that in his personal view this was a good idea - that the best defense was a good attack - that it might be well to get all the facts on the table, since there were very few secrets left anyhow, and that this might head off some of the crippling amendments which have recently been introduced in the Senate.
  3. Senator Stennis was interested in the authority under which the Agency was carrying out our paramilitary program in Laos. The Director responded that the general authority came from the National Security Act of 1947 and subsequent National Security Council directives, but he noted that Senator Fulbright recently questioned this authority.
  4. The Director asked Mr. Houston to prepare a paper on the question of Agency authority to conduct paramilitary operations, particularly as applied to the Laos situation. He asked that we all carefully read the transcript of the hearings of the Senate Armed Services Committee on 22 July where Secretary Laird, Ambassador Johnson and Ambassador Godley testified regarding the Laos situation. He also asked that I prepare a summary record of our various Senate briefings on Laos, and review for him exactly what Senator Stennis had been told on the subject at different times.

JOHN M. MAURY  
Legislative Counsel

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